

B026\MMB Leo

Bilthoven, 1 March 1993

Clarence Barnes
211 Queens Street East
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M5A 1S2

Dear Clarence,

I have received your letter with the request for TmpB. I must say that I was really surprised and also concerned reading your letter. I understand that you willing to try new approaches to fight the disease you are suffering from.

Although I am quite willing to supply you with the TmpB recombinant, I can't supply you with purified TmpB for therapeutic use. There are two reasons for this: firstly there is the problem of purity and secondly that of ethics. Is impossible for me to purify TmpB to such an extend that it can be used in human immunizations. However, if you can find a lab that can do this for you, I will send you the TmpB recombinant as soon as possible. If I would have purified antigen, the board of the institute would not allow the use for immunization in humans. It would create a lot of legal problems. As you may be aware of, but the rules and regulations for experimental AIDS therapy are somewhat different in The Netherlands.

I hope you will understand that I do not want to deprive you of any means to fight the disease you are suffering. On the contrary, I do very much admire your courage. For the above mentioned reasons it is just not possible for me to supply you with the purified antigen.

I would suggest that if you suspect that you might be suffering from a *T. pallidum* infection that has been dormant for a long period of time, that you take up intense antibiotic treatment. I am not convinced that you have lost your antibodies against *T. pallidum* because of undetected reinfection. A fair number of people that have suffered from syphilis lose their specific response over time, especially if one is treated early on (as in your case) in infection. If I were you, I would insist on having my serum tested in a other serological test than VDRL, FTA-ABS or TPI. The VDRL is not a very sensitive nor a specific test. The FTA-ABS is sensitive, but not very specific, therefore it needs absorption (the ABS in the FTA-ABS). The TPI is a very tricky test and is not easy to perform or to interpret. I would suggest to have a TPHA or even better, an immunoblot performed with your serum.

Let us assume that you do carry *T. pallidum* somewhere in your body, would it not be worthwhile to try and detect the treponeme? It might be a good idea to have a PCR done on your blood or spinal fluid. If it is negative things will remain uncertain, however, if it is positive you have got your answer.

I hope my letter is not disappointing for you. Like I wrote before I can't supply you with purified antigen, but if you can find someone who is willing to purify the antigen in Canada, the recombinant is available. Please let me know what you think of my response and on what you are planning now.

Wishing you the very best,

Leo M. Schouls, PhD

Unit Molecular Microbiology